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Palestinians Attack Israeli Airlines Crew in London

On 20 August two, and possibly three, Arab gunmen attacked an El Al airlines flight crew as it was leaving a bus in front of a London hotel. The attack, made in broad daylight, resulted in the death of one El Al stewardess and one of the terrorists. Two other stewardesses and seven British bystanders were wounded.

The attackers hit the crew with submachinegun fire and hand grenades just after the bus arrived at the entrance to the Europa Hotel. They fired into the bus and at the hotel entrance. Three hand grenades were thrown during the attack; one exploded in the hotel doorway, another, in the driveway and the third, under a taxi parked in the driveway. One of the terrorists was killed when a hand grenade apparently exploded prematurely in his hand.

In a radio interview, the president of El Al put the blame for the attack on the British Government for having turned down repeated requests to allow El Al security men to carry arms in Britain. As a result of the attack, British authorities began providing special escorts for El Al airline buses.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) called the Reuter news agency in London and claimed responsibility for the attack. The PFLP stated that the attack was "a last warning against the use of the Israeli airline El Al".

According to press reports, British authorities captured a Palestinian believed to have participated in the assault. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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